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ABSTRACT

This discussion of ways in which OCLC can be used by rural libraries to enhance the library services offered to rural Americans suggests that OCLC is a type of technology that can be used to overcome the insufficiency of funds to finance library services. OCLC products and services that are particularly relevant to small, rural public libraries are discussed in detail with reference to specific programs currently underway, including cataloging services, interlibrary loan, the Group Access Capability Program, and cluster and processing center participation options. Three more recent CD-ROM programs of particular interest and relevance to small rural public libraries are also discussed; i.e., CAT CD-450, a cataloging product; Search CD-450, a reference tool; and Resource Sharing CD-450, a resource sharing tool. Finally, several other ways in which OCLC can further assist small rural libraries are suggested. (EW)

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OCLC and Rural Library Service

By Clarence R. Walters

A Presentation at the Conference On

Information and Rural Economic Development

At Clarion University

Clarion, Pennsylvania

May 5, 1988

According to the printed program, I have been given the charge to talk about the role of OCLC as it relates to technology and the rural American. As a person with an especially modest technical background I find the topic, put in those terms, to be somewhat intimidating. Aside from the intimidation, I am not sure it adequately describes what I would really like to cover during our session today. So, with Bernard's indulgence, I would like to restate the topic in another, perhaps more direct (and for me, a more simplified) way. This restatement is as follows: "How OCLC Can Assist Rural Libraries in Meeting the Information Needs of Rural Americans." This change is made to reflect the fact that I will be talking more about library service and service enhancements than I will about technology -- considerably more. Just as the telephone, the typewriter, the copy machine, and the microfilm reader are tools which enhance service and productivity, the computer is another tool to be used in the same way for the same purpose. If I leave you with anything today, it will be the thought that the primary concern of libraries should be library service and how

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to best provide that service. Technology should be viewed as a tool only to be used if it makes a job easier, better, less costly, or, ideally, all three.

Before going on, I thought it might be helpful to say just a few words about my background, only because it may have some relevance to the topic at hand. I am a professional librarian with a degree in library science from the University of Michigan. During my career, which began about 1960, I have worked in two state library agencies, in Michigan and Connecticut; and in two county libraries, the Wayne County Federated Library System in Michigan and the Contra Costa County Library System in California. Early on in my career I worked at the Detroit Public Library. The two county library systems were interesting because the both had service areas which included the full range of types of communities, including highly urban, industrial blue-collar, upper-income white collar, and rural agricultural areas. While working at the two state libraries, I spent my time working with all areas of the state, again encompassing the same types of communities noted in the county systems. This ran the gamut from the densely populated industrial urban area to the isolated farm community.

During this time I learned one of those basic rules of librarianship which I have kept firmly in mind. All people, no matter what their economic condition, their geographic location, their career or profession, their educational level, or their cultural background, have a need for information and library service. There is nothing inherent in a person's living place which makes him any less in need of information.

Working at the state level provides a good vantage point to gain a fuller understanding not only of the consistency in the need for good library and information services, but also the recognition of the widely disparate library service available to the people of the United States. Unfortunately, those areas of greatest need are often those areas with the least amount of service. This can be equally true in large city neighborhoods and in rural communities. In many instances, this is a condition caused by insufficient funds to finance adequate library service. One way, but not the only way, to alleviate this condition is to make appropriate use of technology. OCLC can help in this process.

I thought it might be helpful to begin by providing an overview of OCLC, including some historical background, structure, and an overview of services. I will then relate this to rural libraries and how rural libraries can better meet the needs of their users with the assistance of OCLC services. Because I think it is easier to deal with questions at the time the issue comes up, feel free to interrupt me at any point.

OCLC began life as the Ohio College Library Center in 1967 when Frederick Kilgour, the founder, and a secretary occupied a single room on the third floor of the Ohio State University Library. It began because a group of Ohio college presidents were concerned about the continuously growing volume of publications received and the same number of staff to handle them. More and more items were being added to the libraries with the same amount of cataloging output. This was causing serious and growing backlogs in technical service departments. The backlogs were causing public service problems for the libraries. Fred Kilgour proposed that the Ohio colleges band together to do their cataloging

electronically with the machine-readable tapes being issued by the Library of Congress. The objective of the college presidents who initiated OCLC was to increase the availability of academic library resources throughout Ohio while slowing the rate of increase of library expenditures. In the beginning OCLC was an intra-state network composed of 54 Ohio academic libraries.

Since 1967, OCLC has grown to become an international network with over 6,000 member libraries, of all sizes and types, world-wide. Throughout the twenty years since it began, OCLC has adhered closely to its original objectives.

It may be useful at this point to read with you the statement of purpose from the OCLC Amended Articles of Incorporation adopted in 1981:

> The purpose or purposes for which this corporation is formed are to establish, maintain, and operate a computerized library network and to promote the evolution of library use, of libraries themselves, and of librarianship, and to provide processes and products for the benefit of library users and libraries, including such objectives as increasing availability of library resources to individual library patrons and reducing the rate of rise of library per-unit costs all for the fundamental purpose of furthering ease of access to and use of the ever expanding body of worldwide scientific, literary, and educational knowledge and information.

I would stress the final two lines of the statement which give as the fundamental purpose the furtherance of ease of access to and use of the

expanding body of knowledge and information. This is another of those basic statements which should be considered as a basic tenet of librarianship.

Now, just a few words about the legal, financial, and organizational structure of OCLC. OCLC is a non-profit membership organization. In its early, formative years it received a number of grants to get off the ground. Although it still receives grants for various special activities, including research projects, its primary source of operating funds now comes from fees for the products and services provided to member libraries. It should be noted that in order to not only pay for day-to-day operations, but also to finance the cost of expanded services, new products, research and development projects, and purchase new and replacement equipment, OCLC's revenues must exceed its income.

Governance of OCLC is vested in a sixteen member Board of Trustees. The composition of the board is an interesting mix of interests and backgrounds. Five members are elected by the board from the professions of business, law, government or finance. Three others are elected by the board from the library profession. Six members are elected to the board by the OCLC User's Council. The president of OCLC is a member of the board and Fred Kilgour, the founder, is a permanent board member.

The Users' Council, noted earlier, is a sixty member advisory body which represents member library interest to OCLC management and the board. Delegates to the council are elected by OCLC regional networks. The number of delegates from each network is based on a formula related to the revenues received from networks for member-library OCLC services. Aside from electing six members to

the board of trustees, the Users' Council acts as an advisory body to the OCLC management and staff. The council meets quarterly.

There are two ways that libraries can become users of OCLC services. The two catagories are called participants and non-participants. Participants agree to do all their current cataloging online or by tapeloading, and are designated as general members. General members participate in the governance of OCLC by having voting rights in electing members to the OCLC Users' Council. Such members are eligible for election to the Users' Council and to the Board of Trustees. The second category, non-participants, may use one or more OCLC services or sub-systems, receive OCLC products and gain access to the OnlineUnion Catalog; however, they are not subject to the requirement of full cataloging like general members. These libraries do not participate in the governance of the organization and prices to them may vary from those of participants.

As noted earlier, there are over 6,000 active participating libraries worldwide. Directly and indirectly, including participating and non-participating libraries, OCLC serves almost 8,000 institutions. To give you some idea of the distribution of full membership, there are currently over 1,200 academic libraries, over 720 public libraries, 510 federal libraries, and over 430 corporate libraries as members of OCLC.

There are member libraries in all fifty states, and OCLC provides systems and services to libraries in 22 countries around the world as well. OCLC services in Europe are provided through the OCLC Europe Office located in Birmingham,

England. An office to service the Asian/Pacific Basin Region is located in Dublin, Ohio at the OCLC headquarters.

Services to libraries in the United States are provided through regional networks contracted with OCLC. There are nineteen networks serving libraries in the United States, including PACNET (serving libraries on the west coast of the U.S.) which is actually an OCLC office. All other networks are independent organizations serving a state or multi-state region. All are membership organizations whose primary function is to act as providers of OCLC services and to provide their member library users various support services such as training and technical assistance. Networks and OCLC work together closely in planning and delivering automated services to member libraries.

The heart of OCLC is the Online Union Catalog. It is the largest bibliographic database in the world. During the past year, the database passed the 17 million mark in bibliographic records, over two million of which are for non-book materials. The database also contains nearly 300 million location records, which make the database an invaluable tool for resource sharing among OCLC libraries. Records are in full MARC format to facilitate ease of user input and computer processing. On average, OCLC users locate records in the Online Union Catalog for 94% of the items they catalog. This leaves only 6% which must receive original cataloging.

When a member library uses a record in the OLUC to catalog a book or other material, the system automatically adds a unique location symbol to the holdings of the record. This provides the basis for another extremely valuable

OCLC resource: a list of the libraries which have cataloged the book, which then becomes an important resource sharing tool for OCLC libraries.

The materials represented in the OLUC are distributed as follows:

Books - 85%

Serials - 6.2%

Sound recordings - 3%

As noted earlier, there are at present about 18 million records in the OLUC. It grows at a rate of approximately 35,000 records every week. Of this number, about 24,000 are added by member libraries. The rest are selected by OCLC from the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, the British Library and other record sources.

That completes a rather quick and, obviously, much too brief an overview of the structure and organization of OCLC , with a short look at some OCLC services and products. It may be more helpful for our purposes here to focus more directly on those services particularly relevant to small libraries. This will include discussion of the following:

- Cataloging services
- Inter-library loan
- Participation Options
    - Cluster
    - Processing Center
- The Group Access Capability Program
- CD-ROM Technology
    - CAT CD-450
    - Search CD-450

Cataloging

The OCLC Cataloging sub-system provides the bibliographic information necessary to many library routines. The user of the online system retrieves bibliographic information from the OLUC by typing simple search commands at a terminal keyboard. The records are displayed on a terminal screen and can be used as they appear or can be edited to fit in with local cataloging rules and practices without altering the OLUC permanently. Libraries enter new bibliographic records by typing the necessary information on a blank work form displayed on a terminal screen.

The system will produce catalog cards automatically. They can be customized to meet the individual library's local specifications and ar pre-sorted at OCLC to save the library this time locally. Currently, OCLC produces almost threemillion cards per week.

Inter-library loan

The inter-library loan sub-system provides an efficient and cost effective way for libraries to share resources. Libraries can communicate over the OCLC telecommunications system, enabling staff to create, transmit, and fill loan requests without the many labor-intensive tasks previously involved in the traditional inter-library loan process. In a sense, this was a great

beneficial by-product of the online cataloging procedure which was the primary objective of the system.

In a week's period, over 3,200 ILL sub-system users enter an average of 55,000 requests. With the database containing about 18 million records and over 300 million location symbols, sub-system users verify over 90% of their requests online, and 87% of these requests are filled and items shipped to borrowers within an average of four days.

The system provides automatic transfer of bibliographic and constant information to the inter-library loan record. It has a link to library inter-library loan policies in the NAME-ADDRESS DIRECTORY. It has the capability to search and request from online serials union lists.

Participation Options

With this general overview of OCLC's structure and services, I would now like to focus more directly on how OCLC can assist rural libraries in serving the needs of rural communities. There has been and continues to be, in the minds of some, the view that OCLC is an academic and research library related organization, and that any public library involvement is with large public libraries. This is not the case, and it is a misconception we are trying to change.

As noted earlier, there are over 700 public libraries which are direct members of OCLC; however, this figure does not reflect the substantially greater

numbers of public libraries which receive OCLC services in other indirect ways. Many public libraries, particularly small rural libraries, are served through state or regional processing centers or cluster groups, or through the OCLC Group Access Capability program. In the processing center approach, either the state library or a regional library system catalogs materials on OCLC for member libraries and provides the libraries with catalog cards. In these instances the center may provide other services such as purchasing and physical processing. In the cluster approach a number of libraries get together to share the cost of an OCLC terminal and to do their cataloging as a joint cooperative effort. This is also an approach used largely by small libraries of all types.

It should be noted that the cluster group option is one which can be used by combinations of different types of libraries. It is not unusual to have a public library and a special library or a school library or all three types grouping together in a cluster arrangement. The Group Access Capability Program is a way for libraries to become involved in the resource-sharing support programs offered by OCLC without becoming cataloging members. I will be talking about this program in more detail in a few moments. I will only mention for now that it is a way that a large number of public libraries of all sizes have been connected to the benefits of the OCLC Online Union Catalog.

Unfortunately, I cannot give you any specific statistics on the number of public libraries reached by OCLC in these different ways. I have asked our marketing analysis staff to conduct a census or survey to determine the number of public libraries reached in this way. I am hoping this will be done sometime during the upcoming year. For the moment, I will have to rely on some

examples which may give you some idea of the magnitude of this kind of OCLC penetration of public libraries.

OCLC has an Advisory Committee on Public Libraries which assists us in a number of ways including advising on the needs of public libraries and acting as a liaison with the public library community. The committee is composed of ten people who represent libraries of various sizes throughout the country, ranging from the Detroit Public Library to that of York, Nebraska, population 7,800. Three members of the ACPL provide good examples of the ways that small rural libraries can be served by OCLC.

Two members of the committee represent public library systems, one in west central Illinois and the other in upstate New York. Both systems serve as processing centers for public libraries in their regions. This service includes providing OCLC cataloging services to members as well as catalog cards produced by OCLC. Combined, these two systems provide these services to over sixty public libraries, the majority of which are small rural libraries, many of them serving agricultural communities.

The third member offers an even more striking example of how OCLC can reach the small rural community. The Kilgore Memorial Library in York, Nebraska serves a population of 7,800 people in what is basically a rural, agricultural area. The library is a full OCLC member; but, it also serves as a processing center to provide OCLC services to 13 small libraries in the region. The funds to perform this function are provided by the Nebraska Library Commission in recognition not only of the benefit to the libraries in this region, but also

in the value of being able to capture the bibliographic holdings in the Nebraska database for resource sharing purposes.

These are only three examples of processes used extensively around the country, and they touch over 73 libraries, most of them small, rural libraries. Even without a census, it is safe to say that OCLC is reaching a far larger number of public libraries than the 700+ direct public library membership.

Just one more note on this subject. Several weeks ago I asked the marketing analysis staff to use the American Library Directory data tapes we recently purchased from Bowker to do a run of public libraries serving a population of under 10,000 and indicated in the report to be receiving OCLC services. It should be noted that the question did not ask whether they were OCLC members, but whether the library made use of computerized services. The run showed that 419 public libraries serving population of under 10,000 people reported that they received computer services through OCLC. The staff then checked that list against our member files and determined that 337 were OCLC members. Although these statistics only scratch the surface of the question of the numbers of public libraries served by OCLC, they do give some sense of the number of small public libraries which have a direct member relationship.

Beyond the numbers, what difference can OCLC make to the small rural library and the people it serves? Perhaps the greatest disadvantage of any small library, whether it is a small rural library or a small branch in a large city, is the limitation on the number of resources readily available in the library. Population size affects financial support, which affects almost all other facets of the library operation, including collection size and type,

staff and building. This automatically translates into smaller collections and fewer resources immediately available. The difficulty of this situation is lessened in a large city by the access to the collections of other branches and the central library; however, even the large city library often needs to go outside its system to meet the needs of some patrons. The small rural library is more isolated, and the options of other resources are not as readily apparent. The OCLC system can act as the window for the small rural library to the resources available not only in the state, but also nationally and internationally.

In discussing the benefits to the people of York, Nebraska, Stan Schulz, the director, pointed out that libraries with access to the OCLC database and the inter-library loan system have a better chance to get timely alternate information needed by their users. He explained that most agricultural information originates as government or corporate data collection, and that dissemination to users typically depends on extension services, farm journals, and displays at agricultural expos. He said that access to the OCLC database can offer a major supplement to these resources and is especially vital when these other sources cannot supply. He gives as an example a farmer looking for information on alternate crops who went to the York Library with an AGRICOLA printout of citations relating to raising edible snails. None of the monographs or journals cited were held by Nebraska, Iowa, or Kansas sources, but using OCLC he was able to locate and obtain materials to satisfy the user's needs.

This window to the wider world of information and library resources is perhaps the single greatest benefit of OCLC to the small rural library. As noted

above, the library and information needs of rural Americans are as diverse as those of people living in urban and suburban America. Although it is true that most requests for information and materials will be filled within the state, access to the OCLC Online Union Catalog will mean that most of the requests not filled in the state will be found in other parts of the country. During a recent trip to North Dakota, I visited with the librarian of a small rural library who told me of the amazement and pleasure of a library patron when his inter-library loan request was filled by a library in the Napa Valley of California.

This support of resource sharing through the inter-library loan sub-system has become a major function of OCLC. What was once viewed to be merely an offshoot of the cataloging system has become an important element of OCLC library support services. This system's effectiveness and use has been expanded substantially by the initiation of the Group Access Capability program. It has carried the OCLC resource sharing benefits to many more libraries, including many small, rural agricultural libraries.

The Group Access Capability Program

Through the Group Access Capability Program process, OCLC has made it possible for states or regional groupings of libraries to build online union catalogs including the holdings of OCLC and non-OCLC libraries, available to all libraries whether OCLC members or not. This program allows for the addition of records from other databases to the OCLC library records for the specified group, whether a state or an intra- or inter-state regional grouping. Once

started, the database continues to grow as additional member catalog records are added, and as other records are tapeloaded into the database.

At this point, the most extensive and notable uses of the Group Access Capability Program are the state database programs in California and North Carolina.

In California, a Group Access Capability statewide database program has been created to include all public libraries in the state. The GAC database was created by combining OCLC public libraries' records with tapeloads of public library users of RLIN and WLN cataloging, as well as records of those receiving commercial cataloging service from Autographics, Baker and taylor, and BRO-DART. These records are made accessible to all libraries designated as participants in the GAC program. Non-OCLC member libraries have access only to the records of other participating California public libraries. OCLC member libraries have access to the complete OLUC. They can also serve as points to transmit requests over the OCLC ILL sub-system for non-OCLC libraries in the GAC.

The other major example of the statewide database program is in North Carolina where the North Carolina State Library initiated the state database project about two years ago. Although the process is similar to California's, a major difference is that North Carolina has not limited participation in its GAC to public libraries. It has decided to encourage participation by all types of libraries. Currently, the North Carolina GAC database includes over 8 million holdings of all types of libraries in the state. Since it began, over 80 libraries have become dial-access users of the program, and many of these are

small rural libraries which are, for the first time, gaining a direct access to the full range of informational resources available to many other citizens of the state.

It is my understanding that transactions related to the statewide database have grown from zero to over 1,600 a month. It should be noted that these do not include the usual ILL on the OCLC ILL sub-system. The North Carolina approach is one which deserves a special program of its own. The North Carolina State library has taken on a pro-active role of building an information network in the state to assist in the economic and business development of North Carolina. This network is designed to take all kinds of information to all parts of the state, including the most rural. In many ways, they are developing an information infrastructure to support business and commerce in a growing technological environment. Howard McGinn, of the North Carolina State Library, is here, and I am sure would be pleased to bend your ear on the North Carolina program and the plans for continued development.

Another example of a Group Access Capability, this time a regional grouping, is in Florida. This project is being funded by the Florida State Library and is a pilot program which includes a number of libraries in the Tampa region. Reports from Florida indicate that the project has been successful, and thought is now being given to expanding the region and including more participating libraries. One measure of the success is the fact that the participating libraries have agreed to continue in the GAC after the State Library removes its financial support for the completed pilot project.

Currently, several other states, including Nebraska and Georgia, are considering the statewide database program.

To reiterate, the thrust of the GAC is to build an online union catalog for a specified area, to include the records of OCLC member libraries and other libraries in the area, accessible to all participants in the GAC for resource sharing purposes. Once started, the database continues to grow as OCLC member libraries continue their normal process of cataloging and as both OCLC and non-OCLC libraries tape-load other records into the database. The GAC program can be started with a minimum amount of lead time.

Another beneficial augmentation of the GAC is the loading in of state or regional union lists of serials, which then puts them together in a single location with the other union list materials.

Although selective members of the GAC (non-OCLC cataloging members) do not have access to the full OLUC for ILL or cataloging purposes, a process can be established to funnel requests which cannot be met within the GAC region to OCLC members who then pass them on through the ILL sub-system on behalf of the requesting library.

Recent OCLC Developments of Interest to Rural Libraries

During the past several years, OCLC has been involved in the development of new products and services which are of particular relevance and interest to small libraries, several of which are of particular interest to rural agricultural

libraries. These developments are a recognition on the part of OCLC of the need to keep abreast of technological developments and ways this new technology can assist libraries and library patrons.

Several specific products making use of the new CD-ROM technology have been developed or are currently under development. These include:

- CAT CD-450 (a cataloging product)
- Search CD-450 (a reference tool)
- Resource Sharing CD-450 (a resource sharing tool)

All of these products represent OCLC's effort to combine the best features of this new technology with those of the Online Union Catalog.

CAT CD-450 has been developed to provide libraries with a major portion of their cataloging on a compact disc. This is done by extracting the most used records from the OLUC and putting them on a CD. The major difference between this CD cataloging tool and others is that for those items not available on CD the user can obtain the records online. It also provides for a mechanism to continue to add records to the OLUC to assure the continued growth and vitality of the OLUC.

Search CD-450 is a reference tool which combines various reference databases in specific subject fields with bibliographic records of similar subjects in the OLUC› These are combined into packages of reference resources.

Perhaps, for our purposes for this conference, the best example is the OCLC Agricultural Series which combines the complete AGRICOLA database from 1979 to

present with CRIS database, and the Agricultural Materials in Libraries database compiled from the OCLC OLUC.

AGRICOLA has 2.5 million citations to general and specialized agricultural fields. CRIS, produced by the Cooperative State Research Service, includes abstracts and progress reports for current research on agriculture and related subjects. It has over 30,000 records covering active and recently completed projects.

Agricultural Materials in Libraries (AgMIL) includes materials in all formats pertaining to agriculture, food production, forestry, fisheries, and veterinary medicine from the OCLC Online Union Catalog. The database covers the twentieth century and includes references to materials printed as early as 1537.

The Search CD-450 Agricultural Series includes three databases on four compact discs. Current files for AGRICOLA and CRIS are stored on one disc; retrospective AGRICOLA files are available on two discs; the fourth disc has the Agricultural Materials in Libraries database.

Other Search CD-450 reference series include ERIC and Science and Technology.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, I would summarize by stating that there are a number of ways that OCLC can assist small rural agricultural libraries to better serve the people of their communities:

1) by making the routine jobs of cataloging and catalog card preparation more efficient and less time consuming to accomplish;
2) by providing accessibility to a wide range of library and information resources, both within and outside the state;
3) by providing access to reference information through the new CD-ROM technology;
4) by providing states and regions with a major resource sharing tool through the Online Union Catalog Group Access Capability program.

Although not primarily geared to serving small rural libraries, the OCLC system has become a substantial support mechanism for these libraries in assisting them to better meet the library and information needs of rural Americans.